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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/15/2016  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KISL](#) [PTER](#) [AS](#)  
SUBJECT: WESTERN AUSTRALIA MUSLIMS WORRY THAT MOSQUE  
SHOOTING INCIDENT MAY BE LINKED TO NATIONAL DEBATE ON  
INTEGRATION

Classified By: Perth Consul General Robin K. McClellan

¶1. (C) Summary: West Australian police told Perth Consul General privately that they have no firm leads on the September 29 drive-by shooting at a northern Perth mosque, in which a single bullet narrowly missed women and children among the 400 worshippers at a Friday night service. No one was injured in the incident. Federal and state officials, including the Prime Minister, have expressed outrage at the shooting and the state government has offered to help fund increased security measures at mosques. Some observers have queried whether the shooting represents and escalation of anti-Muslim sentiment that may have been fueled by recent public debate over the perceived lack of integration of Muslim immigrants into Australia. End Summary.

Bullet Fired into Mosque Service  
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¶2. (U) A shooter fired a single bullet from a stationary car into a second floor window of a Mosque in Mirrabooka, a northern Perth suburb, during evening prayers on September ¶29. The bullet traveled 79 meters from the curb through a second story window of the mosque, passing through the gallery in which the community's women were praying, and another 11 meters within the mosque to lodge in an opposite wall. More than a hundred women and children were in the gallery, and the bullet passed between two praying women, one of whom is the current president of the Western Australian Islamic Council (Noorul Islam Society) and the principal of one of the campuses of Perth's Australian Islamic College. According to the mosque's leaders, the worshippers completed their service, but were very shaken by the event.

¶3. (C) Several children were playing outside the mosque at the time of the shooting. They and two adults who were accompanying them witnessed the incident. Police have publicly stated they believe the shot came from a high-powered rifle, fired from a green four-wheel drive vehicle. The Imam at the mosque, a close contact of the Consulate General, has told us that no casing or other debris were recovered from the road, and that the bullet was so destroyed by impact with the interior mosque wall that police were not able to gather further information from it. One police contact has told us that investigations to date suggest that the incident was a "one-off" target of opportunity shooting, but they have not yet developed any firm leads.

Raises Concern in Muslim and General Community  
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14. (U) The attack, which occurred during the Muslim fasting month of Ramadhan, has raised considerable fear and outrage in the WA Muslim community. Mosque leaders believe the attack was religiously motivated. The Mirrabooka mosque had been the object of previous low-level attacks, including graffiti and rock-throwing. The WA state government has announced it will help provide funds for a security upgrade for the premises.

15. (U) State and federal officials were quick to show support for the mosque community. Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs Andrew Robb participated in a small October 5 fast-breaking reception at the mosque, as did the area's representative in the State Parliament and the head of the Department of Immigration's Perth office. (The Consul General also attended the event.) The state Minister for Citizenship and Multicultural Interests, Tony McRae, announced that the state government would work with police and local government to increase safety at all mosques. Prime Minister John Howard also condemned the shooting.

Comment: Incident Comes Amid National Debate over  
Integration of Muslim Immigrants  
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16. (SBU) At least one prominent WA Muslim has commented that the mosque attack represents an escalation of anti-Muslim sentiments that have been fueled in recent months by public debate over the integration of immigrants into Australia. Media coverage of the debate has highlighted comments made by PM Howard that some groups of Muslim migrants in particular have failed to learn English and accept common "Australian" cultural norms, such as equal rights for women. Similar concerns that Australian Muslims are being "singled out and

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marginalized" by political leaders were aired a week later at an academic symposium hosted by the Centre for Muslim States and Society at the University of Western Australia.

17. (SBU) Background: The Mirrabooka mosque is one of Perth's most tolerant and ethnically diverse. A substantial number of worshippers are originally from South Africa, but other ethnic communities are also represented. The former president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils and current chairman of the federal government's Muslim advisory board, Dr. Ameer Ali, who recently caused a stir by stating that the Koran (which some Muslims believe is the literal word of God) should be "reinterpreted" for today's society, attends Mirrabooka mosque services. (Note: Press coverage of his statement occurred after the shooting, not before.) The Imam of the mosque, Sheikh Muhammad Agherdien, is also a professor at the Australian Islamic College. He played a pivotal role in the successful visit earlier this year of Imam Yahya Hendi, a speaker sponsored by the Embassy and Consulate General under the Visiting Speakers' Program.

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